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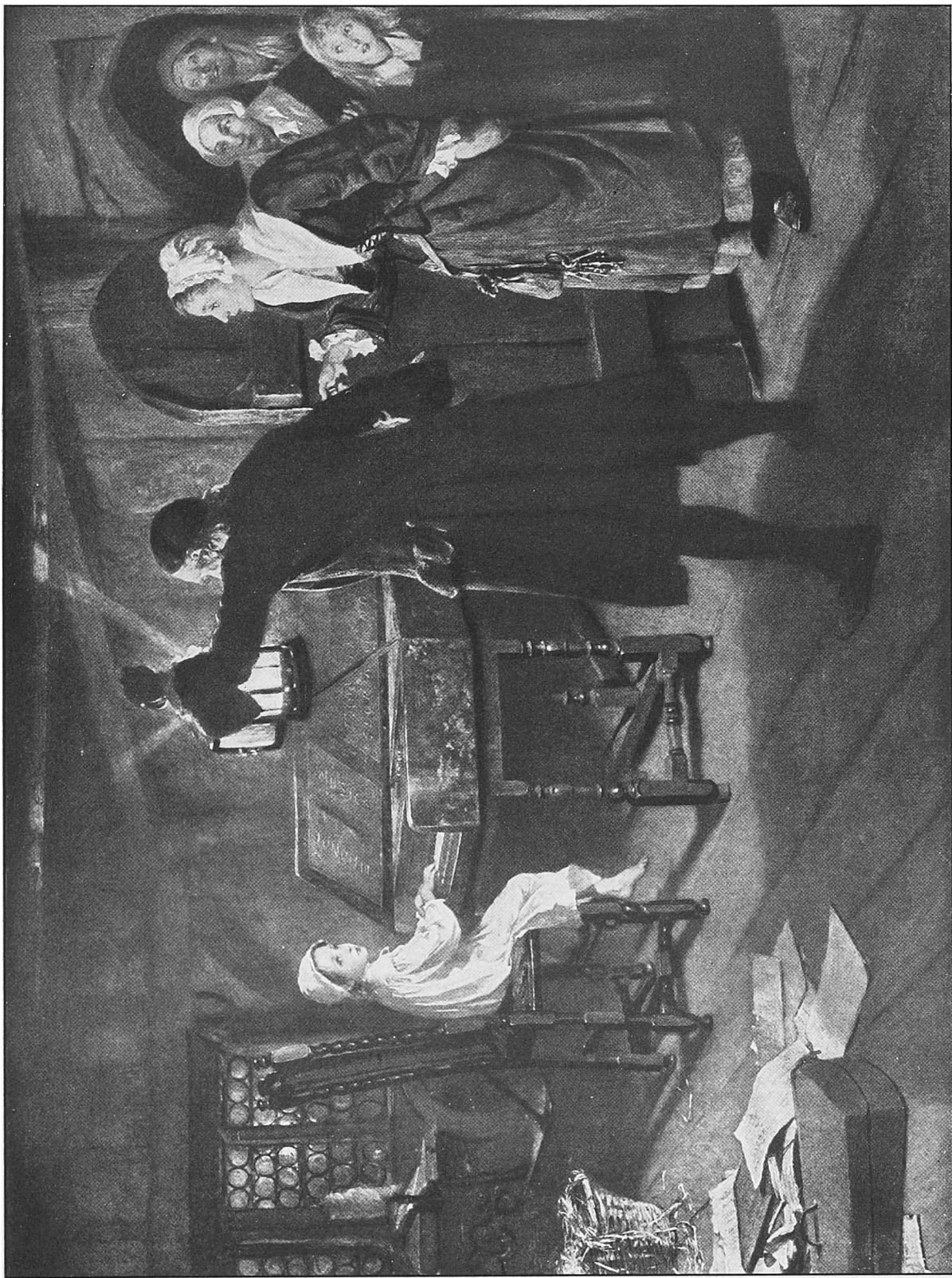
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"YOUNG HANDEL IN THE GARRET"

BY MARGARET ISABEL DICKSEE

(See page 513)

OUR CHILDREN, THE HOPE OF MUSIC BUILDING A MUSICAL AMERICA

BY AUBERTINE WOODWARD MOORE

IT is often said the hope of the church is in our children. With the change of one word the saying may properly be applied to music. The hope of our music, the entire future of our music, unquestionably lies in our children. Bearers of the treasures of many lands as we are ourselves, they are passing their formative years in a period of our history in which there is both opportunity and demand for the development of everything of value that we have inherited. The time is indeed ripe to quicken and foster in them their inborn need of finding fuller utterance of the higher things of life, the divine mysteries, than words can afford.

When unspoiled by false training, normal children manifest a keen sense of rhythm and of tone intervals. They are able to keep time accurately to music they hear, repeat in tune melodies that have been sung or played for them in tune, and early show a tendency to beat fantastic movements and sing little ditties of their own. If prepared rightly for their lofty mission, they, with their active minds and hearts, are well adapted to become the builders of a Musical America, filled with a truly musical people.

Before the goal can be reached, many and stubborn obstacles must be overcome. Too often these are fortified by the efforts meant to conquer them. Money is expended freely by ambitious parents and guardians, time and energy are employed without stint by the child, in view of gaining what is called a musical education; but too often this is by no means the musical education that educates. It is more apt to be, on the contrary, a process that stultifies god-given powers, and crushes inward sensibilities and aspirations.

An overwhelming obstacle is found in the widespread ignorance of child nature that exists even among teachers who desire to guide their pupils aright, and the consequent failure so to till the already fertile soil that good seed sown may yield an abundant harvest. Prominent obstacles in the way of healthy progress are a craving for speedy display, with the tendency arising from it to erect an educational structure on shifting sands, rather than on a solid rock-bed, and the habit of permitting, even teaching, the worship of false ideals. These and many more hide-bound obstacles interfere with the reign of true music in our commonwealth.

In his early acquaintance with words, the child imitates what he hears. If it be his good fortune to live in a home where correct and refined language is constantly heard, his speech will become pure and refined long before he has any acquaintance with grammar or rhetoric or is able to read or write. The language of tone, which is equally his birth-right, deserves similar treatment, and when it receives this, it responds readily.

Good music becomes incorporated in the being of children who grow up in its atmosphere, and simple and beautiful melodies that have been heard are readily repeated. When they know a number of

songs they will begin to con over little tunes that come to them they know not how. Listen to the average healthy, hearty child at play, and you will often find him singing away to his heart's content, words and music all his own. This tendency is one to be encouraged, not discouraged and derided, as it is too apt to be.

Long before his attention is called to rules or musical instruments, the child should be as familiar with the elements of the tonal language as with those of words. Intervals and *nuances* are instinctively felt by him under such conditions. When finally knowledge is engrafted on experience, feeling and imagination, true culture is the result. With familiarity comes naturally a craving to understand. This being the case, music study can not fail to be interesting from the beginning. Instead of being something strange and apart, it will be an eagerly grasped means of casting bright light upon something that has long been felt but only dimly apprehended.

The instructions given in the music lesson should be of an intimate kind and so well adapted to the needs and requirements of each individual pupil that they carry conviction with them. In such a case rules and regulations seem so thoroughly alive they will do their work without need of constant reminders and repetitions. A musical education, built stone by stone on a firm foundation, will inevitably be a lasting and valuable one. No one portion of the structure will be more difficult to form than another, for each stage is complete before a new one is begun.

In grappling with a musical instrument greed for technical dexterity is too frequently permitted to deal a death blow to music. It is forgotten that we are not so much in need of more brilliant performers as we are of more *musicianly understanding*. A child is pushed forward to ever more daring pyrotechnic feats, while no effort is made to have his musical intelligence keep pace with his mechanical skill or to fill the vessel of technic with the spirit of music.

From the earliest steps everything played or sung should be performed understandingly, therefore artistically. If each step be placed firmly there will be no backsliding. Moreover, if all musical instruments could be regarded as mediums through whose aid music is to be studied, we should soon dwell in the kingdom of musical appreciation. The art of arts would then no longer be regarded as a mere matter of diversion, and its true worth would be realized.

When rightly employed the pianoforte is a valuable aid to the study of music. By means of the piano in the home, a wide acquaintance with the world's best musical literature may be obtained. Capable of yielding an infinite variety of shadings from soft to loud, it can even reproduce orchestral effects as well at least as a photograph can reproduce those of a painting. It is also an admirable incentive and auxiliary to ensemble playing, and

there is no limit to the joy it may kindle in family and social life. On the other hand, there is no limit to the torment and mischief it may cause when it is abused. Under wrong conditions no musical instrument is so calculated to murder the spirit of music as is the piano. As a matter of course the native sensibilities are deadened if not wholly destroyed in the poor young victim of false music-teaching who sits before the keyboard, hour after hour, practicing fiercely without listening to the tones he is mechanically producing—without comprehending their significance. In case the piano is wretchedly out of tune the damage is complete; all the practicing in the world can not develop a musicianly person, able to enjoy and express music.

The benefits of music are priceless, and they accompany man from the cradle to the grave. With-

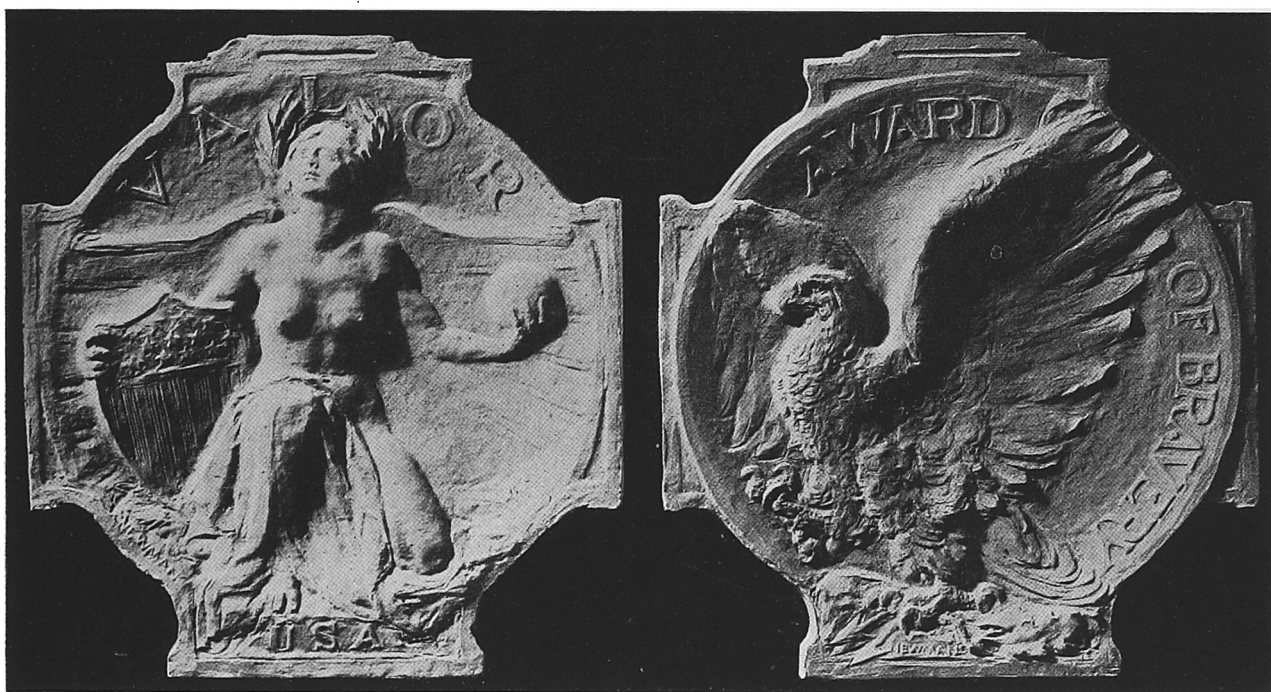
out its aid religious expression lacks fervor. Deep things which words can not portray find vent in music. It is the language which best kindles our sympathies, and rouses keen understanding between people who speak different tongues and could not otherwise gain an insight into one another's feelings.

When the present cruel war is over music will have a bigger rôle to play than ever before. If the children be properly prepared this rôle should reach its noblest proportions in our America. That typically American bard Walt Whitman prophesied that our larger needs and experiences would one day receive bigger musical expression, greater music, than the world had known before. The fulfilment of this prophecy lies in the hands and hearts and brains of our children.

Aubertine Woodward Moore

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(See page 551)